

PURGATORY.

THREE religions divide the universe : the religion of Satan, which leads to hell ; the religion of the Pope, which leads to purgatory ; the religion of Jesus, which leads to heaven.

Satan says to us, Do evil.

The Pope says, Commute your faults at my treasury.

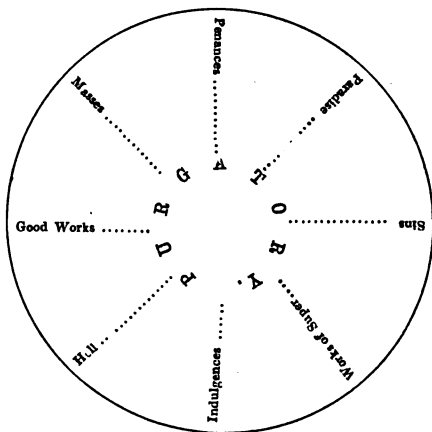
And Jesus says, I forgive you your sins.

Let us examine these three points separately.

The religion of Satan offers us pleasure for a few hours,—suffering for eternity. I do not tell you that sin is without sweetness, but you know that it is not without remorse either ; and one of these days you will know that it is not without punishment. Enjoy it then, for one year, for ten, twenty, a hundred years if you can, but remember that it is probably at the cost of eternal pain. The religion of Satan is the religion of hell. This point is clear : let us pass to the second.

The Pope has for his religion, purgatory. In fact, it is to purgatory that the whole tends: the masses of priests extricate souls from purgatory ; the indulgences

of the Pope abridge purgatory; the merits of saints free from purgatory; the penances of the faithful liquidate the debt of purgatory; our sins lengthen, and our good works shorten our period of purgatory. Purgatory is, then, the centre of Papal religion, as the following diagram exemplifies—



One understands why Satan should preach hell to us; he loves evil. But why does the Pope preach to us purgatory? Because he loves money.

In fact all that has reference to this doctrine is an

object of speculation. Sins are redeemed by penances, penances are exchanged for masses, and masses cost thirty sous. These transactions vary, but they all have money at the end of them, and the only object of this diversity of forms is to disguise the final tinkling result. Do you wish to sin? fast, and abstain from meat. If you do not like this, take out a dispensation, and if you want a dispensation, lay down your money. Do you wish to commit the serious offence of marrying your cousin? give money! Do you wish by a mass to rescue your father from the flames of purgatory? give money! Would you have some pious brotherhood exonerate you from the task of prayer, by undertaking it for you? give money! Sin is the beginning, and money is the end of all; and between these two points are placed penance or mass, fasting or nine days' devotion, almsgiving or a relic. According to individual taste, one of these ingredients may be commuted for another; the relic may be added to the mass, fasting subtracted from the penance, the nine days' devotion transformed into alms; but none of these chymical equivalents of the church can supersede money, whereas money can replace them all. For instance: tell your confessor that your stomach is too weak to bear fasting—he will willingly accept twenty rounds of the chaplet instead. But ask him to take twenty such rounds in payment for a mass of thirty sous, and be sure that he will decline. I

remember to have read in a pamphlet, published by the Bishop of Marseilles, upon the occasion of a jubilee, that all the penances he imposed might be transmuted at will, or superseded by one other, but *that* other could not be superseded by any of them. Now this other was a gift to a seminary ; so here again is that inevitable thing, money.

Do you wish to convince yourself that purgatory is indeed for the Pope and the priests, the hen with the golden eggs? observe that they send almost everybody thither, or at least they act as if everybody was going there. In fact, before your mass on behalf of a relative is said, do they ever ask you what the conduct of that relative has been, with a view to ascertain whether he may not already happen to be in heaven or hell? Never! Yet, if he is in hell, what is the use of trying to take him out of a purgatory he has not even entered? And if in heaven, how take him from a purgatory which he has already left? But try another expedient: ask a priest for a mass, not on behalf of your father, but on that of the most remote of your ancestors; tell him that this ancestor was an excellent Christian, and that if, indeed, he went at his decease into purgatory at all, the probability is, that at the present time—after the lapse of ten centuries—he must have quitted it, and the priest will reply that the safest plan, at all events, is to have a mass said, and if you offer payment for two,

twenty, or a hundred, you will not be refused. Tell him, on the contrary, that the defunct was a great sinner, a parricide, and that he is most probably in hell; he will still tell you that it is the wisest plan to have a mass said, and that perhaps, your thirty sous may afford him some relief. In short, the priest is always hopeful enough to believe that the dead are not in hell, but not enough to believe them in paradise; for this simple reason, that the direct entrance into paradise or into hell would alike render purgatory superfluous—that without purgatory there would be no more masses, and without masses, no more money! And thus the priests will say masses as well for the holiest as the most guilty. The 21st of January they pray for Louis XVI.; give them thirty sous, they will pray for his judges. And yet, if the former is a martyr, the latter are murderers; if the one is in heaven, the others are in hell. But this in no way prevents our curés from acting as if both were in purgatory; and if you like, they will perform a mass on behalf of them all at the same time.

If you have still a doubt left, ask the priest the exact number of sins which must be committed in order to go to hell! He will not tell you. Ask him the exact amount of virtues which entitles to paradise. He will answer that it is impossible to define exactly; that is to say, that he will always leave you just between heaven and hell, in other words, in purgatory; for the

very evident reason that he has conferred upon himself the privilege of drawing you from thence.

Purgatory is then, the great mint where the priests' wealth is coined; it is the soul of the system, the summary of the church, the foundation of the Roman religion; and the religion of the Pope may be fitly named, as I have named it, the religion of purgatory. We have only now to become acquainted with the religion of Jesus, which is that of heaven.

But here a question offers itself. Are not the Pope's religion and that of Jesus one and the same? No; and there needs but one proof of this, which is that Jesus has never—no, never—spoken of purgatory! This is not all, his apostles have said nothing, positively nothing about it! In short, the whole Bible does not once speak of it, its very name is not to be found therein. Let any one show me the word purgatory in the whole extent of the Scriptures, and I become a Roman Catholic!

But I can give you another proof that neither the name nor the thing is to be found in the Bible. Here it is: Jesus, in his description of the last judgment, places the righteous on his Father's right hand; the wicked on his left; but no one between. Is not this alone a proof that there exists no middle state between the one and the other? And, as if to complete the demonstration, Jesus in the midst of this solemn scene

says to the one, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you;" and to the others, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." But here again, Jesus sends no one to purgatory. Is not this an evident proof that purgatory does not exist? And once more, since the matter must be made clearer than the day, let us quote the words in which the Saviour concludes his picture of the last judgment. "These," says he, "shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." That is all, and there is not a word said of any person's going to purgatory. Did Jesus forget it, or did he know nothing about it?

And now, will you have an argument taken, not from the Bible, but from simple common sense? Listen. When the end of the world comes, and there are no longer any priests to celebrate the mass, what then will become of the souls in purgatory?

They cannot be relieved as former souls have been. What! because there are no longer any priests on earth, souls no more guilty must yet remain longer in torment? But this is absurd, it is unjust, unchristian!

Another proof: you are rich; I, on the contrary, am poor. You cause two or three hundred masses to be said for your father, and his soul passes from purgatory to Paradise. As for me, since I cannot buy a mass, and no one will give me one gratis, I have no mass said, and

my father remains in horrible torment ! Does, then, the difference of fortune extend even to the other world ? Does God treat the rich with consideration, and the poor with severity. But this is absurd, unjust, unchristian !

Take another proof : a rogue dies, leaving the half of his plunder to defray the expense of masses ; consequently his time in purgatory will be much diminished, and passing into heaven, he will finally be recompensed through the means of the money which he stole. In the next house an honest man dies of hunger upon his pallet, without leaving a single sou to his curé ; thus his period of purgatory remains undiminished, so that God actually makes him suffer all the longer for not having stolen as did the other ! Is not this absurd, unjust, unchristian. It is so absurd and so unjust, that my mind is crowded with arguments, and I seem to want words to express them. I will only add one other.

Purgatory is the greatest of all encouragements to the commission of sin. If you tell a man, that, in consequence of wrong-doing, he will go to hell, this fear may be salutary, and he will, perhaps, recoil from incurring a punishment destined to last to all eternity ! But tell him that there is a purgatory, and that it is even possible to abridge the period he will spend there, and the man who desires to do evil will feel encouraged

to do it ; for all suffering that can be remedied seems supportable to him, and, moreover, the present pleasure compensates, in his opinion, for the future penalty. He says to himself, that after his period of purgation, time will remain for the full enjoyment of an everlasting heaven ; and that since sin has not more terrible consequences, it is not worthwhile to relinquish it.

But place that man on the contrary, between the perspective of an endless hell and an endless heaven ; tell him that he will enjoy without limit, and suffer without end ; that he will be lost for ever, or for ever saved ; and then that man, scared by an eternity of anguish, or allured by an eternity of joy, will shun evil in order to do good ; or, at least, if his passions still tyrannize over him, thoughts of eternal felicity, or of eternal torment, will come and urge him to resist them : whereas the expectation of a limited punishment allows him to go to sleep in sin, and prevents him from being converted to holiness. Now, as the end of Popery is Purgatory ; so, Paradise is the end of Christianity. This is what I have now to prove.

Jesus wishes the salvation of all, young and old, rich and poor, virtuous and sinful, or as he himself expresses it, "both good and bad." What, then, will he do to place that salvation within the reach of all ? Will he ask for masses ? No, for then the poor would be lost. Will he exact difficult tasks ? No, for then

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children could not be saved. Will he require a certain number of good works? No, for then this or that sinner must needs perish. What, then, can that condition be, compliance with which is equally easy to all—to young and old, rich and poor, to the desperate transgressor and to the concealed one? This is the condition; Jesus himself names it: it is only to trust in him, only to consent to be saved, only to be willing to enter into heaven; in one word, says the apostle Paul, to “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!”

But does Jesus indeed thus offer heaven to all? Is there not a certain amount of perversity which excludes the hope of pardon? The Gospel will tell us. At Christ's right hand, as he hung upon the cross, there was a thief, who asked for mercy. What answer did Jesus make to him? “To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise.” What good action had that man done? Not any: only he had believed in Jesus Christ, and, thief as he was, he entered into paradise! Is not that the fairest monument of Divine mercy? And if Jesus granted paradise to such an one when he repented and believed, will he not do so to all, whatever they be, who also repent and believe? Yes; paradise, heaven, life, blessed and eternal life, to all that believe and repent; this is the religion of Jesus Christ! And do not imagine that Jesus forgives, because sin appears to Him a small thing no, on the contrary, it is because sin is so hate-

ful in His sight, that He alone could expiate it. His blood has flowed, Jesus has died, and therefore it is that you are saved. The priest must be paid to free you from hell; Jesus pays in your place, that you may enter into heaven. The priest sells you his purgatory; Jesus gives you His paradise. See which of the two you prefer applying to.

Ah, beware, reader! these short pages which you have been reading may, perhaps, have an eternal influence on your future state! As long as you did not know that the doctrine of purgatory was unchristian, and conducive to sin, so long you were only half guilty in having adopted it. But now that you know it to be opposed to the Bible, and opposed to morality, if still you retain it, it may well be supposed that you do so, just because it leaves an open door to your sinful inclinations; you retain it in order to sin with less restraint. But remember, that it is too late to do this freely! You have seen the light; you can no longer screen yourself behind the plea of an ignorance which has this day been removed. In vain you re-close your eyes—you have seen you are condemned!

But no; you will not remain thus half enlightened, you will seek, you will pray, for clearer revelations; you will examine the Bible for yourselves; you will listen to Jesus Christ! you will study the writings of His apostles; you will breathe upon the light, not with

the fearful breath of the priest, to quench it, but rather with the breath of prayer and study, to revive it. Is this a *hope* that I here express? Alas! I fear that as far as regards a large number, it will prove only a *wish*!

O my God! in the case of one at least, may the aspiration be fulfilled!